MARVEL

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OLIVEIRA
MORALES
NITRO

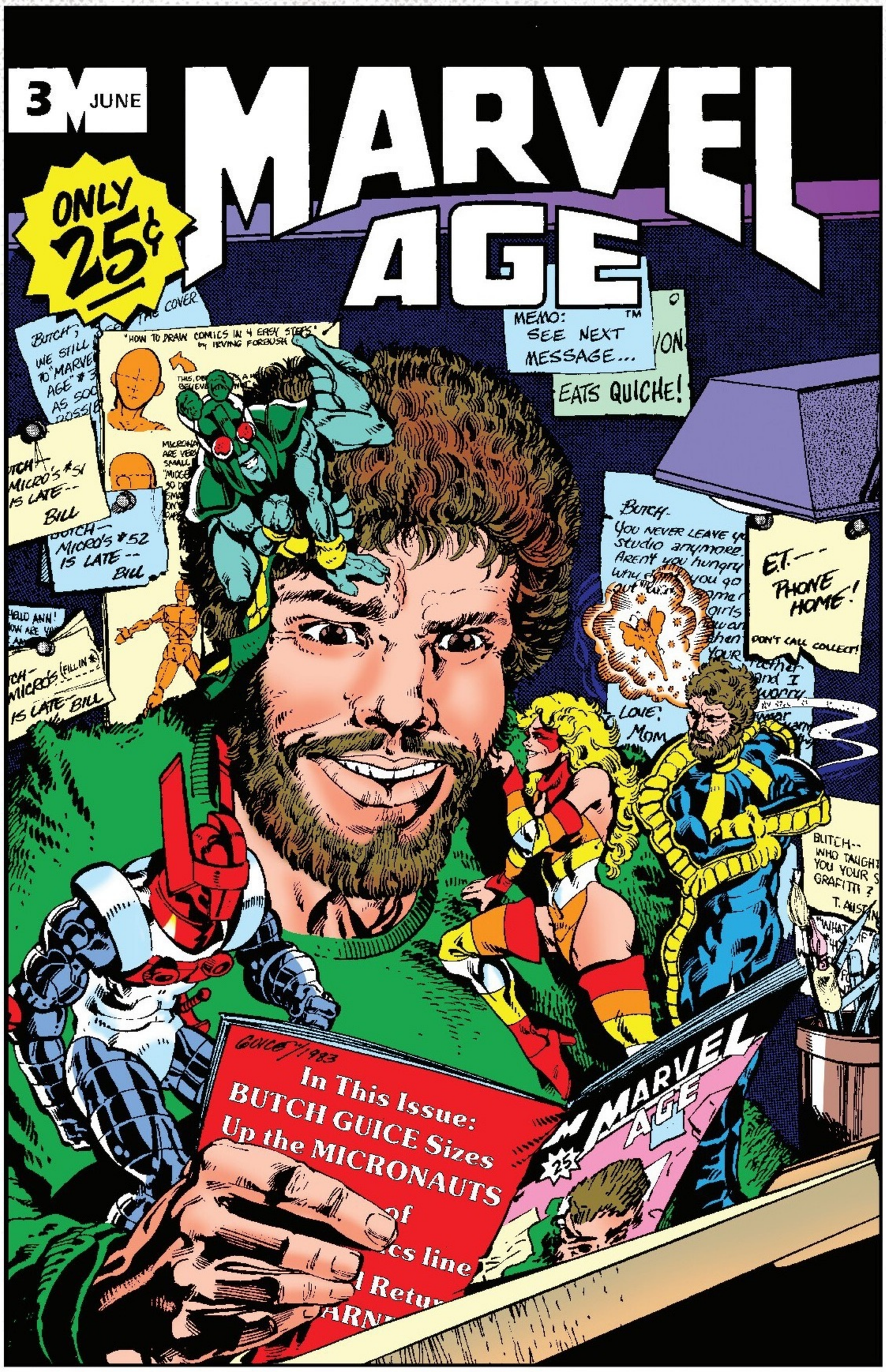
GUGGENHEIM
STA. MARIA
SÁNCHEZ-ALMARA

BRING ON THE BAD GUYS

LOKI

RATED T+

BUTCH GUICE



Butch was one of the best craftsmen working in the comic book industry.

He had the skills of a classic era comics artist like John Buscema or Jim Steranko, and I think some of the work we did together on *Captain America* and the *Winter Soldier* will rank with the best of the best. He was a lot of fun to work with, and he was an underrated talent his entire career. I, and so many others, will miss him.

— Ed Brubaker

ON THE BAD GUYS

LOKI

The SOUL FORGE is an ancient artifact that can give whoever gains access to it control over all souls on Earth. The forge can only be utilized after a sacred incantation is delivered along with the souls of descendants from an ancient cult known as the LORDS OF DARKNESS.

Whoever gains access to the Soul Forge puts the fate of the souls of the entire planet in peril. As MEPHISTO and his reluctant disciple SISTER SORROW aim to power the forge, villains from throughout history are called upon to deliver the souls required...

"THE KING in YELLOW"

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"THE LAST LORD of DARKNESS"

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LOKI CREATED BY STAN LEE, LARRY LIEBER & JACK KIRBY

"MAKER OF TALES AND MAKER OF MISCHIEF-- IT SEEMS YOUR LITTLE SCHEMES HAVE REACHED THEIR ***END.***

"I WONDER, THEN, LOKI--BEFORE THE GODS BIND YOU FAST, BEFORE SERPENT'S VENOM BLINDS YOUR EYES FOREVERMORE-- WILL YOU TELL ME, 'LORD OF LIES,' ONE PRECIOUS ***TRUTH*** AT LAST:

"HAVE YOU FINALLY LEARNED A STORY'S COST?"

FOR KNOW: EVERY RAGE AND WHISPER, DARK *MEPHISTO* HEARS.

AND WHAT A *NAUGHTY GOD* YOU'VE BEEN--YOUR WHOLE *PANTHEON* IN SUCH AN UPROAR! I WOULD HAVE *LOVED* TO SEE POOR SMUG BALDER'S FACE...

YOU'VE BROUGHT *RAGNAROK* ROUND AGAIN--MUCH TOO EARLY! AND NOW BIG BROTHER *THOR* IS THUNDERING AT MY WALLS...

BUT I CAN *FIX* IT. TURN *BACK* THE CLOCK...

WHAT DO YOU THINK? SHALL I ALLOW THOR TO FETCH YOU--LET HELL SUFFER THE INDIGNITY OF ANOTHER UPSTART SON'S CLUMSY HARROWING--AND SEE YOU DRAGGED TO ODIN'S FOOT IN CHAINS?

OR SHALL WE STRIKE A *BARGAIN,* YOU AND I?

I...*THANK* THEE, DREAD LORD, FOR YOUR...*AID,* IN MY HOUR OF NEED. BUT--

HMF.

BUT I DO WONDER ABOUT THE... *PROFFERED TERMS* OF OUR BARGAIN?

AH. THE *FINE PRINT.* DON'T WORRY.

TO SHIELD YOU FROM ASGARD'S STORMS, I ASK ONLY A *TRIFLE...*

THERE WALKS ABOVE A MORTAL BOY-- A POOR, LOST DESCENDANT OF KHONSHU'S CRUMBLED ORDER.

MY DESIGNS REQUIRE HIS *DEATH.*

HARDLY WORTH THE DISPATCH OF A GOD, OLD DEMON.

AH, BUT IT MUST BE HANDLED *PRECISELY...*

HIS ANCESTOR'S SOUL WAS *CONSECRATED TO MY PURPOSE.* ALAS, IT WAS... *MISHANDLED.**

BUT MAN CARRIES HIS FATHER'S SINS, KNIT FAST TO HIS BONES. FOR GENERATIONS OF HIS OFFSPRING I HAVE WAITED.

AND NOW THE *DEVIL* WILL HAVE HIS *DUE.*

TAKE THIS DAGGER. SLAY THE BOY WITH IT. CAPTURE HIS SOUL.

THE PERDITION OF A MORTAL SOUL FOR MY FREEDOM?

*SEE *BRING ON THE BAD GUYS: DOOM #1!* --LOOKOUT LINDSEY

"A DEAL EASILY STRUCK."

PARIS. 1895.

♫♫ ALONG THE SHORES THE CLOUD WAVES BREAK,
AS TWIN SUNS SINK BENEATH THE LAKE,
AND SHADOWS LENGTHEN LONG... ♫♫

...WHAT?

...WHAT IS THIS MELODY?

♫♫ AND BRIGHT THE NIGHT WHERE BLACK STARS RISE,
WHILE STRANGE MOONS CIRCLE THROUGH THE SKIES,
I DARKLING SING MY SONG... ♫♫

LOKI... TARRIES?

YES, SISTER SORROW. HE IS DISCOVERING.

THE WAY THAT THIS WILL HURT.

A... STORY. ONE I'VE NEVER HEARD.

WITH POWERFUL MAGIC WITHIN...

...SIR?

YOUR VOICE... HOW DO YOU KNOW SUCH MUSIC?

OH. MY... MY FATHER WAS A DANCER. MY MOTHER A SINGER.

AND I...I HAVE BAD DREAMS.

SUCH A GIFT. RARE IN ANY REALM.

MEPHISTO DID NOT SAY HOW LONG I HAD...

AND PERHAPS... PERHAPS THERE IS A WAY TO--

IT SEEMS LOKI *MORE* THAN TARRIES. ALL OF *PARIS* SHIFTS AT HIS MAGIC...

WAS THIS *ALSO* YOUR PLAN?

...HM.

SIR? FOR THE DITTY, PERHAPS A FRANC OR TWO?

OH, FORGIVE MY ILL MANNERS. I AM THE *VICOMTE DE FARBAUTI*...

...AND I THINK I CAN SPARE MORE THAN *THAT*, BOY.

IN RETURN, ALL I ASK...IS *EVERYTHING.*

BEHOLD... THE PALAIS PANDEMONIUM!

MY GLORIOUS OPERA HOUSE--AND YOUR NEW ARTISTIC DOMAIN!

IT IS... STAGGERING.

YES, AMAZING WHAT SOME DWARVEN SPELLCRAFT CAN DO...

PARDON?

NOTHING.

HERE YOU'LL LIVE. SLEEP. COMPOSE.

WE WILL FILL THIS PLACE WITH MUSIC. DANCING.

AND YOUR STORY.

BUT THERE... THERE'RE JUST A FEW VERSES! SOME DANCE STEPS!

NOTHING LIKE A *FINISHED* SCORE YET!

THEN IT'S TIME TO GET TO WORK, ISN'T IT?

BEYOND THE LAKE...BENEATH A PALLID MASK... THE KING WHOM EMPERORS HAVE SERVED...

MY SLEEP WORSENS... I DO NOT THINK THIS LABOR IS GOOD FOR ME...

OH, IT CERTAINLY ISN'T.

BUT THE NEW PAGES ARE WONDERFUL!

OF COURSE, YOU'LL HAVE TO DANCE THE HERO PRINCE YOURSELF...

I... WILL?

WHO ELSE COULD DO IT? AS FOR YOUR KING IN YELLOW...

THIS IS JONATHAN NILSSON. A BARITONE, SHIPPED FRESH FROM SWEDEN.

HE SHALL DANCE YOUR DEMON.

AH! THE MAESTRO HIMSELF!

I HAVE READ YOUR SCORE! YOU WRITE WITH SUCH ***STRANGE BEAUTY***...

...I DO?

AND AT THE END OF THE MASQUERADE DANCE, THE KING IN YELLOW DESCENDS...

...AND REVEALS THE DREADFUL TRUTH: HE *WEARS NO MASK AT ALL.* THE DREAD SUBLIMITY ITSELF...RAW AND TERRIBLE.

AND OUR HERO IS DRIVEN MAD... AND DRAGGED TO THE UNDERWORLD...

IT SHOULD ALL BE VERY PRETTY!

IN A HORRIBLE WAY.

AND...IS THERE NO SAVING HIM? NO ROOM FOR A HAPPY ENDING?

OH NO. HE IS *QUITE* DOOMED!

MARKED SINCE BIRTH.

HM. I THINK HE *LIKES* FEELING SAD...

HA! WELL. IT'S *VERY* IN FASHION...

MEPHISTO LOSES PATIENCE, LOKI...

TELL THE OLD SERPENT GOOD ART CAN'T BE RUSHED.

YOUR SOFTNESS FOR THE BOY IS--

"SOFT"?!

I HAVE SLAIN KINGS AND GODS AND BROTHERS ALIKE!

HOLLOWED MY HEART! TORE ALL HAPPINESS TO TATTERS! BROUGHT **RUIN** TO MY **REALM!**

WHY?!

HKK!

BECAUSE IT MADE A GOOD STORY.

THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS TO ME NOW.

YOU ARE MADDER THAN THE BOY...

SOMETHING IS *UNLOCKING* ON THIS STAGE, IN HIS SONG.

OLDER AND MORE POWERFUL EVEN THAN YOUR MASTER OR I.

I WILL SEE ITS CURTAIN RISE...

"...NO MATTER THE COST."

FULL MOON TONIGHT. MADNESS STALKS ABROAD.

I SHOULD BE WRITING.

SHEESH-- DO YOU EVER *RELAX?*

WHERE DOES ALL THIS *COME* FROM?

MY FATHER WAS A DERVISH. HE DANCED TO MEET GOD. INSTEAD, HE MET MY MOTHER. AND FORSOOK ALL ELSE.

SHE MUST HAVE BEEN REMARKABLE.

SHE WAS.

"SHE WAS FROM EGYPT. SHE TOLD ME THEY BELIEVED IN ANCIENT DAYS THAT ONE ONLY LIVED SO LONG AS ONE'S NAME WAS SPOKEN.

"AND SO KINGS BUILT MONUMENTS AND TEMPLES AND PYRAMIDS.

"TO BE REMEMBERED."

I AM NOT RICH. I CAN LEAVE NO MONUMENT. BUT I CAN DO THIS.

YOUR WORK IS BEAUTIFUL. BUT THERE ARE ***OTHER*** WAYS TO TOUCH THE WORLD.

COME-- I'LL ***SHOW*** YOU...

RUBBISH. YOU ARE DISTRACTED. AND WAVERING.

DOES IT HAVE TO BE... PERFECT?

DOES IT HAVE TO COST SO MUCH?

YOU WRETCHED COWARD! YOU PROMISED ME EVERYTHING!

THROUGH ME, THE WHOLE WORLD HEARS! YOU LIVE FOREVER!

WITHOUT ME... YOU ARE BACK ON THAT STREET, WITH AN UPTURNED HAT OF COINS.

UNTIL HISTORY BLOWS YOU AWAY WITH THE TRASH.

YOUR CHOICE.

YOU ARE...NOT WHAT YOU PRETEND...

...ARE YOU?

OH, YOU FINALLY NOTICED?

I AM THE TELLER OF TALES. FATHER OF SIRENS AND OF SONG.

LOKI LAUFEYSON, LORD OF LIES.

AND I KNOW WHAT IT TAKES. TO MAKE THESE STORIES *LIVE.*

THE ENVENOMED SEAR THAT DRIPS IN EVERY POET'S EYE!

THE HARD-WON CHAINS--THE MOUTHS SEWN SHUT--TO BIND FAST THEIR TELLING!

WHAT IT COSTS TO DAZZLE THE WORLD AND MAKE FALSEHOOD FEEL *REAL!*

HGG. HGG.

THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT? YOU THINK...ART IS JUST...*PRETTY LIES.* DON'T YOU?

YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND MY WORK AT ALL.

BUT I WILL SHOW YOU.

OPENING NIGHT AT LAST!

ARE YOU READY, LITTLE MAESTRO?

...GALA JITTERS?

WHERE ARE YOU HIDING?

YOU POOR, BESOTTED THING.

WHA-- WHO ARE YOU?

ONE WHO KNOWS THE TORMENT. OF CARING FOR THE HOPELESS DAMNED.

LET ME OFFER YOU A SMALL MERCY.

A BLESSING, FOR YOUR BIG PREMIERE:

BREAK A LEG.

AAAAHH!

NO NO NO.

HM. SEEMS OUR SILENT PRODUCER HAS NOTES...

DEADLINES ARE TIGHTENING.

YES, IT IS TERRIBLE, OF COURSE. A WASTE OF TALENT.

BUT FOR THE SAKE OF THE ART...

...THE SHOW MUST GO ON.

MUSTN'T IT?

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU HAVE A TICKET?

YOUR TIME IS UP, LOKI.

MISERABLE WHEY-FACED GIRL-- MIND YOUR OWN CONTRACTS!

♫♫ HEAR NOW THE SONG THE STARS SHALL SING, BENEATH THE TATTERS OF THE KING, FOR HE I CALLED MY FRIEND... ♫♫

YOU DARE INTERFERE WITH MY WORK!

I DO WHAT I AM COMMANDED.

UNLIKE YOU.

♫♫ THOUGH LIFE IS SPENT, THOUGH VOICE IS DEAD. ♫♫ ALL GOES UNSUNG AND TEARS UNSHED-- AND ALL I LOVE MUST END... ♫♫

YOU THINK I CAN BE BROUGHT TO HEEL? OUTSMARTED BY THE DAMNED?

WHO WAS *BESTING DEVILS* BEFORE THE CARPENTER'S LITTLE TOURING SHOW?

♫♫ FEEL THE ROCK AND FEEL THE CHAIN! FEEL FLESH SPLIT AND SCAR AGAIN AS VENOM STINGS THINE EYES! ♫♫

TRAGIC, REALLY.

YOU SEE, SOME OF US HAD *WIT* ENOUGH TO MAKE AN *EXIT* PLAN.

NOW, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...

♫♫ LET EVERY SOUL AT LAST BE SOLD! AND ALL EARTH TREMBLE TO BEHOLD-- ♫♫

♫♫--THE YELLOW KING ARISE!!! ♫♫

"...THAT'S MY CUE."

YOU, SIR, SHOULD UNMASK!

INDEED? BUT I WEAR NO MASK. AT LAST.

NO MASK?

NO MASK!

HELLO, LITTLE ARTIST. IT IS I--THE GOD WHOM YOU HAVE WORSHIPPED.

WHOSE WORK DRIVES ALL TO MADNESS.

YOU HAVE PRACTICED MY ART. PLIED MY MUSIC. DANCED MY RITES.

YOU OWE ME YOUR SOUL.

HKK!

MY SOUL?

HEH.

THEN YOU MISSED.

BRAVO!!!

BRAVO!!!

EXQUISITE!

A MASTERPIECE!

"IT IS DONE, KING OF SHADOWS..."

...I HAVE BUTCHERED THE KHONSHU DESCENDANT.

THE DAGGER IS...EMPTY, PRINCELING OF ASGARD.

HM. QUITE.

YOU WOULD THINK A KING OF HELL MORE CAREFUL IN HIS BARGAIN'S TERMS.

"TAKE THIS DAGGER."

"SLAY HIM WITH IT."

"CAPTURE HIS SOUL."

I HAVE DONE ALL THREE. MY OATH FULFILLED.

TO THE LETTER.

OUR BARGAIN IS SATISFIED, OLD DRAGON. MY CRIMES AGAINST ASGARD ERASED. AND I AM FREE.

I WIN.

BUT IF HIS SOUL IS NOT IN THE DAGGER, THEN...

WHERE IS IT?!

AH. I THOUGHT YOU KNEW.

"WHEN WE BEGAN, YOU ASKED IF I KNEW WHAT IT TAKES TO TELL A STORY.

"THE PENALTIES IT INFLICTS. THE CHAINS IT FORGES.

"THE SCARS IT LEAVES.

"I HAVE ALWAYS KNOWN.

"WHEN TOLD RIGHTLY--WHEN ALL IS HAZARDED, WHEN NOTHING IS SPARED...

"...IT TAKES A SOUL."

:SIGH:

BRAVO.

THE KING IN YELLOW

AN OPERA BY

SOLD OUT!!

END.

IT'S TIME TO GO, SORANA.

WE HAVE MUCH TO DO, YOU AND I.

I HAD NO IDEA WHAT MEPHISTO MEANT BY THAT.

THE LAST LORD OF DARKNESSS

MARC GUGGENHEIM writer
MICHAEL STA. MARIA artist
DONO SÁNCHEZ-ALMARA color artist
VC's TRAVIS LANHAM letterer
MIKEY J. BASSO editor
MARK PANICCIA senior editor

BUT I CAME TO LEARN IN DUE COURSE.

FOR *YEARS*, I WAS HIS INSTRUMENT.

A *PAWN* IN HIS MANY SCHEMES.

A *WEAPON* TO BE WIELDED WHEN IT SUITED HIM.

CENTURIES AGO, HE DISPATCHED ME TO THE ANCIENT CITY OF *K'UN-LUN.*

THERE WAS A *MASTER* THERE NAMED *GUO.*

GUO HAD BEEN A *LORD OF DARKNESS* BEFORE MEPHISTO HAD *SLAUGHTERED* THE ORDER.

BUT HE STILL POSSESSED THEIR *SECRETS.*

UNFORTUNATELY, HE DID NOT... COME WILLINGLY.

YOU... DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS.

I CAN'T EVEN *REMEMBER* THE LAST TIME I DID ANYTHING OF MY OWN VOLITION.

INDEED. I SENSE MUCH *SORROW* IN YOU. A HARD LIFE FULL OF LOSS, EXTENDED BEYOND YOUR YEARS.

I SAW NO POINT IN TELLING HIM HOW *RIGHT* HE WAS.

WHATEVER IS *COMPELLING* YOU, WHOEVER IS *CONTROLLING* YOU, I CAN HELP *FREE* YOU FROM IT.

I HAD NO REASON TO *DOUBT* HIM AND EVERY REASON TO *BELIEVE* HIM.

AND, FOR AN INSTANT, I WAS *TEMPTED.*

NO...

CHOOM

...ASKING FOR *HELP* IS HOW I BECAME *BURDENED* IN THE FIRST PLACE.

I DON'T WANT TO KILL YOU...

DON'T *CONCERN* YOURSELF WITH THAT.

I'M NOT.

THERE ARE *MANY* PATHS TO MEPHISTO.

BUT ONLY *ONE* IS THE MOST DIRECT.

SHUNK

THE MASTER WAS A GOOD MAN.

RATHER, HE HAD *BECOME* ONE.

BUT HIS *PAST* WAS *NOT* FREE FROM SIN.

I BROUGHT HIM BEFORE MEPHISTO SO THAT THE KING OF LIES COULD ASK HIS *QUESTIONS.*

THE MASTER STILL REQUIRED SOME *PERSUASION.*

BUT HE QUICKLY *SURRENDERED* HIS SECRETS.

I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THEM AT FIRST.

THERE WAS TALK OF THE *LORDS OF DARKNESS.*

AND A *RITUAL.*

AND *DAGGERS.*

THE INSTRUMENTS THAT WOULD IGNITE THE SOUL FORGE.

AND THE SOUL FORGE WAS POWER UNBOUND.

SISTER SORROW...

...YOU WILL FIND THESE *DAGGERS* FOR ME.

YES...MY MASTER.

POWER I WOULD--GOD FORGIVE ME--HELP MESPHISO *OBTAIN.*

TO BE CONTINUED...IN BRING ON THE BAD GUYS: RED SKULL!

NEXT:

Red Skull #1

DOOM #1

GREEN GOBLIN #1

ABOMINATION #1

LOKI #1

DORMAMMU #1

MEPHISTO #1

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